



CITY OF LEWISTON

Department of Planning & Code Enforcement



FROM: David Hediger, City Planner
DATE: February 16, 2016
RE: Summary of Planning Board comments and changes to draft comprehensive plan.

The Planning Board completed their review of the second draft of the comprehensive plan – Legacy Lewiston – in January 2016. This draft was provided to the Board in March 2015 and incorporated initial comments provided to the consultants, TPUDC, from the Think Tank Committee, City staff, the Planning Board and the community.

The comments provided by the Planning Board on this second draft are extensive. However, the majority of them involve correcting typos, wordsmithing, and providing clarification. Given the size of the document and the large number of changes, the following is a summary of the more substantive changes and comments the Planning Board has noted on this draft of the plan. It should be noted there are many other changes and comments throughout the plan provided by the Board. The listing below attempts to highlight items the Board clearly agreed or remained divided upon which resulted in possible changes to policies, goals, or need for additional clarification. These comments should be considered in full context with the applicable sections of the plan.

1. P. 9: Established Lewistonians, new language: This population knew Lewiston in its heyday as a thriving industrial City, or perhaps are part of families that have long resided in the City. Now in their 70's and older, many may have worked in the mills or manufacturing industries of days gone by. They like to remember their City for what it was before the decline of traditional industries. Generally speaking, they are the parents of the "boomers" and are widely heralded for their loyalty, hard work, patriotism, respect for authority, self-reliance, and a strong sense of civic obligation. Some Established Lewistonians may find it difficult to get excited about Lewiston again, while others see the potential in change. They can and do provide a wealth of knowledge about the history and unique characteristics of their hometown.
2. P. 9: Another group and picture is added here as follows: "Accomplished Boomers": This population of Lewiston now in their 50's and 60's are beginning to ease into their retirement years. Despite such negative experiences as Vietnam, race riots, and recessions, they have been a fortunate generation with more educational, financial, and social opportunities than any generation before them. They may have grown up and raised families in Lewiston during times of optimism, achievement, and downturns. As a group, they expected the world to improve with time. Their years of experience are an asset, but they are challenged by the technological skills and experience of the Next Generation.
3. P. 10: Additional language to provided clarification on formatting of the plan: The Plan includes columns of "What We Heard" as an attempt to express some of the feedback

received during the planning process. But not all of these comments necessarily reflect the overall consensus of the community or the future direction of Lewiston. Remember ...”

4. P. 14 and 15: The Bates College survey section will be changed to a survey of Lewiston colleges after guidance from the Think Tank and Planning Board. The initial survey’s timing was poor, with Bates students leaving for summer. Staff surveyed a second time with other schools included. This section will be update to reflect additional replies. The point of this section is to provide a snapshot of students’ thoughts about Lewiston. New language: The survey was administered in June of 2013 and May of 2015 in attempt to collect a larger sample from students attending Bates College, USM's Lewiston-Auburn College, and Kaplan University.
5. P. 30 and infographics throughout the document: The consultant started their work in the summer of 2013. As the Planning Board completed their review, some of the data has become out-of-date. Some census data appears to be for the Lewiston Metropolitan Statistical Area (MSA) instead of just Lewiston. Staff is in the process of updating infographics throughout the plan with new or more accurate date where applicable. For example, page 30, poverty levels, will be updated with 2014 data as follows: Lewiston 23.6%, Auburn 17%, Portland 21%, Bangor 25%, and Maine 13.9%.
6. P. 46. Graphic to be deleted or moved to the housing section. Interesting figure, but misleading with the source being a "property owner"; this is not representative of the entire downtown or community.
7. P. 51. Add category “Culturally Significant Buildings”: Lewiston offers a number of venues that have and continue to contribute to the community’s identity. The Basilica Saints Peter and Paul, also known as Saints Peter and Paul Church, was finished on July 18, 1936 and dedicated on October 23, 1938. On July 14, 1983, the church was added to the National Register of Historic Places and is the second largest church building in New England. An active church with an impressive presence amongst the city skyline, it also serves as venue for various events. The Androscoggin Bank Colisée, with a general admission capacity of 4,000 (3,677 seated), is a multi-purpose arena that opened in 1958. Perhaps best known as the venue for the heavyweight boxing championship rematch between Sonny Liston and Muhammad Ali, the Colisee has and continues to be home to hockey league teams as well as trade shows, concerts, and other sporting events.
8. P. 55: The Board and Think Tank remained sensitive to naming specific businesses and organizations. In this section, the consultant listed many local housing assistance organizations. However, the Board believes it is necessary to include additional organizations:
 - Tedford Housing. They work together with people in their communities to find lasting solutions to the challenges of homelessness, including shelter, housing, and services that empower adults, children, and families in need.
 - Veterans Inc.: They help eliminate homelessness among veterans by providing quality services and opportunities in the areas of health, employment, and housing.
 - CEI. They provide financing and technical assistance to small and medium-sized businesses, community facilities, renewable energy, commercial real estate, and affordable housing.
9. P. 56: new language: Depending upon the need, families have a number of resources for

assistance including code enforcement, the housing authority, general assistance, and the state's health and human services and environmental departments. Tenant advocacy groups may provide assistance for those not able to speak English, unfamiliar with the reporting process, or concerned with authoritative actions by agencies or landlords.

10. P. 59: additional language: The tax credit units are offered at a fixed rent intended to be affordable to families at 50-60% of Area Median Income. Tenant based Section 8 assistance is unique in that it can be used throughout the city for renting an apartment of an assisted family's choosing. This allows the local landlord community to benefit from federal subsidy dollars.
11. P. 62: under the pie charts an asterisk must be added with the following noted: When applying average move rates by household type, approximately one-quarter of these households will move over the next five years. Assuming appropriate residential units are available, Lewiston has the potential to capture a portion of these moving households. Young households are the largest group likely to move, and thought should be given to whether Lewiston is in a good position to attract those moves.
12. P. 68: new language: Improvements like those to the bandstand are in part guided by a master plan providing guidance for future park improvements. Recent improvements include new plantings and upgrades to infrastructure.
13. P. 79: #3 needs to be deleted as the Reservoir is not available or safe for swimming. Replace with #3 Rancourt Preserve and Androscoggin Greenway.
14. P. 83: #3 needs to be deleted as the Reservoir is not available or safe for swimming. Replace with #3 Rancourt Preserve and Androscoggin Greenway. Description to be added.
15. p. 93: add language to the Public Transit section: Rail service to Lewiston has played an historically large role in the development of Lewiston. Many French-Canadian immigrants arrived in the Lewiston via the Grand Trunk Railway. However, passenger rail service to Lewiston ended in the 1960's. With an apparent resurgence in passenger rail interest and the success of the Amtrak Downeaster from Boston to Portland, connectivity via rail is now seen as a means of promoting economic development in Lewiston in addition to improving and providing an alternative form of public transit.
16. p. 93: add language: add to section: The lack of intercity bus service also creates transportation and connectivity barriers for residents.
17. P. 96 and 97: text and map listing roads and levels of services must be updated.
18. P. 105-107: updates being made to Fire and Police data.
19. P. 110: additional language regarding solid waste: These costs may be further reduced with improved recycling rates. In 2015, only 8.6% of Lewiston's residential solid waste (including that from schools and small businesses that bring their waste to the solid waste facility) was recycled. The city also is home to and has relationships with ReEnergy Lewiston LLC, which accepts and recycles materials from construction and demolition activities, and Cassella Waste Systems, Inc.'s single stream materials recycling facility, which accepts and processes recyclables including cardboard, paper, plastic, metal and glass that is remarketed and transformed into new products.
20. P. 121: Under "Organization of the Map", there was much discussion about the Conservation and Growth Map. Not all Board members agree with where growth is projected or limited. However, as noted in the previous paragraph of the plan, the Map is not a zoning map. It is intended to show, in a general sense, the desired pattern and

location of future development. The boundaries shown are imperfect and intended only to reflect the general pattern of desired future development.

21. P.122: Some concern was expressed as to whether the statement "...focus should be made on infill development and redevelopment in areas already served..." conflicts with recommendations elsewhere in the plan for new development (i.e. Geiger Neighborhood and Industrial Village).
22. P. 128: Character District (CD3) Suburban Neighborhood. Planning Board expressed concerns that "expand(ing) the ability to create an "accessory apartment" in "existing single family homes" may change the fabric of single family neighborhoods.
23. P. 131. The Summary of Impact to Community Facilities and Services table is helpful and interesting, but some of the statistics are in need of revisiting and updating. As an example, student projections in Lewiston are somewhat of an anomaly given the impact of new immigrants relocating in the community. Therefore, the numbers have been updated based upon the Lewiston School Department's most recent projection. This projection takes into account that Lewiston's average household size exceeds the state average, in part due to new immigrant families. That number is expected to drop in future years, along with enrollment being limited by housing capacity.
24. P. 134: Some Planning Board members expressed concerns with these conceptual plans. For example, Geiger School Neighborhood encourages unrealistic growth where infrastructure does not exist. The image shows too much density and the school would have to expand if developed in this pattern. There was also concern with the small lot sizes shown. Other Board members noted that all the plans and images in this section titled "Promote Mixed Use Centers" are conceptual and that greater emphasis is needed on focusing on these ideas as concepts being considered rather than specific plans for these areas. To make it clear that these images are for illustrative purposes only, the term "Concept Growth Sector Plan" and/or "concept" is being added where necessary on pages 134-163.
25. P. 138 -139: Under "Provide More Housing Choices," the Planning Board expressed some concern with the density shown for housing, lack of parking at the school, house lots being too small for septic, the need for expansion of public utilities, and lack of room for growth of the school associated with new residential development. The Board feels the graphics should show less density and make clearer that the development pattern shown is conceptual in nature. The consensus of the Board was that the concept may be appropriate, but the graphic representation is too grand in scale as shown.
26. P. 139: "Cottage Courts." The Planning Board expressed some concern about small lot sizes. It was also noted that if the small greens are to be maintained by an association, not the City, such associations have historically been problematic in Lewiston due to lack of interest and responsibility by the homeowners. If implemented, thought and consideration is needed as to who and how they will be maintained.
27. P. 144-145. Urban Farm concept in this part of town caused some concern. Even conceptually, having pigs and chickens in this area is likely problematic. Recognizing much depends upon the size and scale of the operation/farm, i.e., livestock versus fruit and vegetables, this is probably not appropriate for this area.
28. P. 150-151: Lisbon Street Suburban Retrofit Concept. Some Planning Board members noted the area currently lacks creativity; that infill with retail should occur here first before a new site is developed at exit 80.

29. P. 151: Safe Streets: Some Planning Board members expressed concerns that this is not an appropriate road to be considered for a "complete street". They recognized surrounding streets may be more appropriate and that the level of development shown may accommodate complete streets. They suggested revising the language so that safe and complete street designs are considered when appropriate without specific streets referenced. Language to be added: Consider, when appropriate, the implementation of complete streets. Additional consideration should be given to seeking alternate routes to avoid congested areas.
30. P. 161-162: Rural Living Hamlet Concept: Some Board members welcomed the desire and ability to preserve open space in rural areas. But the imagery provided shows a density that would require extensions of city sewer. Understanding the images are conceptual, consideration should be given to amend the graphic to show larger lots.
31. P. 170. Goal amended to "establish a TIF district in the currently existing Mill, Riverfront, and Centreville zoning districts to support local business".
32. P. 171. Under "Strengthen Regional Alliances," the Planning Board discussed whether this section should speak to Lewiston being a service center community, noting this is a benefit for surrounding communities and the need for those communities to contribute to Lewiston's public service costs.
33. P. 172: Some Board members question whether this number (up to 600 new housing units by 2020) remains realistic given economic conditions.
34. P. 172: Some Planning Board members feel this language ("...focus on providing new, high quality, multifamily residences as opposed to the current trend of building single family homes in areas not currently served by water and sewer") is inconsistent with other sections of the plan where competing strategies/policies are recommended. Some questioned whether we looking for in- fill or conservation of rural areas, or new subdivisions and new commercial/village centers.
35. P. 172: Reference to public and providing funding is made. Some Board members have expressed concerns with additional public funds and investment toward subsidized housing and whether additional subsidized units will improve the overall desirability of Lewiston.
36. P. 173: Promote Construction of mixed income ~~affordable~~ housing. The Board noted the goal and policy must also encourage and look to enhance opportunities specifically for market rate units and not just affordable units.
37. P. 174: Delete "Implement Vacancy Licensing". There was discussion about whether this section should remain: some thought it was a good idea, others questioned whether it was realistic and how to implement given current staffing levels.
38. P. 175: Establish Land Bank: Concerns were expressed about pursuing land available on the open market to support development. Land banking may be appropriate to support a municipal use (i.e. school, fire, police, etc.). Otherwise, let the private sector resolve title and lien issues. Some Planning Board members have concerns about potential collusion with the City entering into direct negotiations with property owners. There was also concern that it may become a burden to the finances of the community.
39. P. 176: Delete "Start a Board and Seal Club". Not legally allowed.
40. P. 181: Some Board members question if these numbers (2,000 new jobs by 2020 in Androscoggin County) remain realistic given the current economic climate.
41. P. 192: 2-Way Street Network: Many Board member expressed concerns and doubts

with returning or making roads two-way and stressed that, while this should be considered, it should not be a priority.

42. P. 193: Board did not want two-way conversions to take precedence over other traffic improvements, while also recognizing some downtown roads may make sense to change upon additional studies being completed. Language added: While specific streets are referenced as examples, the City's goal should be to consider which streets may function more effectively for purposes of improving traffic flow, business activity, and pedestrian activity.
43. P. 198: Improving Neighborhood Street and Intersections: The Board noted creating sidewalks 15' wide is challenging to due existing ROW widths, travel lanes, returning to two-way traffic on certain streets, the accommodation of bike lanes, etc. Sidewalks of this width should be allowed only when determined to be appropriate.
44. P. 201: Regional Coordination (Transit): The Board felt MDOT does not do a good job of obtaining public input on improvements. Additional language: The City should look to improve communications with Maine Department of Transportation with respect to community input and involvement on planned improvements. This may also result in greater public participation when meetings are held in Lewiston.
45. P. 201: Regional Traffic and Transit Service: additional language: The city should also look to gather support from surrounding communities and explore the possibility of removing the Maine Turnpike toll barrier in Gray/New Gloucester. The toll barrier encourages trucks and commuters to avoid the the turnpike north of the Gray exit - ruining the quality of life and damaging secondary roads with heavy weight vehicles.
46. P. 206: Delete entire "~~Create a TDR Program~~" as staff and Board have since learned (and reaffirmed) that TDR's don't work well Maine. Bates students completed a study showing we have too much available land and not enough development pressures for implementation.
47. P. 219: additional language related to solid waste: The city needs to emphasize the financial benefits to the community of recycling and improve upon the existing low rates of 11.2% in fiscal year 2013 and 8.6% in 2015. Additional outreach and education on the benefits of recycling must also be implemented. Additional efforts should also be made to increase the utilization of the zero- sort recycling facility, an underutilized asset to the community.
48. P. 220: Capital Project Investments: in years past, the School Department did not always submit a list of capital improvements for the Planning Board and Council to review. Additional language: The School Department must include its capital requests and participate in this process.
49. P. 231: add another sub-category under Resource Allocation titled " Staffing: Additional city staffing must be considered to support the successful implementation of this plan. Specifically, the need to right size the Department of Planning and Code Enforcement will assist in moving forward with the vision and guiding principles of this plan in accord with the implementation matrix."
50. P. 233-257: Implementation Matrix (also referenced as pages 1-25): changes on these pages relate to the Transformations section of the plan in effort to makes sure the action and parties are consistent with that referenced in the plan.